FREEDOM

anarchist fortnightly

Vol. 58 No. 17 6th September 1997 50p

Pensions, health, education, all in the melting pot, so ...

WHEN ARE WE GOING TO ACT?

Governments and their 'expert' advisers cannot deal with any problem in a straightforward 'simple' way. If they did there would be no *raison d'être* for them and the talking shop at Westminster.

This comment has been provoked by the government's latest proposals regarding pensions, and the possibility that we would have to pay the GP when we needed to see him or her. Already, of course, the free prescription of the distant past for all now costs more than £5 per prescription, and the dentists are now automatically refusing to take on new patients on the NHS (which explains the permanent desk in the waiting rooms selling insurance policies for future dental treatment – the British have always been at the top of the European league for dentures and bad teeth).

Most *Freedom* readers were not born when the Beveridge plan was modified and introduced by the first post-World War Two Labour government. No question of abolishing the capitalist system (a solution never adumbrated even by Old Labour!) but the war, the destruction wrought by bombing from the air and the physical privation with rationing, etc., had created a political mood that was eager for radical changes, and not only at the workplace (full employment, thanks to millions of men and women in the services and the war industry, had created a rebellious 'proletariat' – indeed there were more unofficial strikes during and immediately after the war than there have ever been since). So the so-called welfare state was launched with general approval. One of the most important and relevant aspects of this welfare state, from the actuarial point of view, was that *everybody*, rich or poor, was automatically entitled to the services and benefits (child benefit is an example) without any payment. And surely the obvious way of raising the money required was partly by the national insurance stamps, and by income tax, which discriminated in favour of the poor and at the expense of the rich. When Thatcher came into office in 1979 *the super-tax rate was 80%*. For years since it has been a mere 40% – and you can be sure that the rich also employ accountants who can justify deducting 'legitimate expenses', and what about the offshore investments, the banks which the inspector of taxes here knows nothing about?

This writer's argument is that the New Labour lot feel unwilling or unable, for reasons they know best (wanting to remain in office not for just one term has been the case with all previous Labour governments – and to succeed they cannot afford to put off the well-to-do middle class who voted for them), to tax the rich "until the pips squeak" (as Lord Dennis Healey declared, probably in an unguarded moment, in the Old Labour days).

The New Labour lot have not only succumbed to the professional and super-rich mafia by declaring that they won't increase taxation, they have also betrayed the 30% of the population at the bottom (or near the bottom) of the human pile by cutting down on all kinds of 'perks' of that welfare state which benefited them. At the same time, by introducing a kind of means test for everything, they are also creating a huge and costly bureaucracy apparently concerned with 'driving out' the so-called 'cheats' and 'frauds'.

As we said earlier in the opening paragraphs, nowadays no government (Tory or New Labour) can think of even a modest welfare state where everybody can enjoy an excellent free service: education, health, public transport (the only practical way to remove pollution, city congestion and road-rage deaths is for the abolition of private cars), but they must be financed. A couple of ways of financing such a welfare state could be:

1. Tax the rich to the point where they will not be able to indulge in town and country houses, yachts, private planes and all the rest.
2. The 'defence' policy of this government costs some £23 billion. They are worrying about the old age pensioners' pensions costing about £30 billion so why not give the pensioners an extra £5 a week and cut down on that ridiculous 'defence' budget, which is only being encouraged because the arms industry in this country is second only to the USA in exports. Obviously in order to have potential enemies you must export arms to them – and wasn't this country exporting scrap metal to the nascent German arms industry right up to a few weeks before the British declared war on the Germans?

We need hardly say that our 'advice' to Blair & Co. will not be acted upon because, by its very definition, capitalism (being production for profit) can only make and keep the rich rich at the expense of the millions of workers and their families who live in, or near to, poverty level (even relatively speaking).

Anarchists can only go on repeating what, to us, are basic facts – and today even the so-called 'liberal' capitalist press is confirming the facts. What they don't do is to suggest that as long as the 'proles' go on accepting the *status quo*, nothing will change. Indeed, all the evidence is that the rich are getting richer at the expense of all those at the bottom of the pile – the ones who actually *produce* the wealth as opposed to the rich who spend their time *consuming* it galore.

So, dear readers and comrades, if you are part of the exploited 30% at the bottom of the human pile don't expect your exploiters to change the situation in your favour if *you* do nothing about it, or just hope that the lottery will do it for you (the odds are one in fourteen million).

The old socialist saying was: "We are many, they are few". So?

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The Jobless, Liverpool Dockers, Magnet Workers, Hillingdon Hospital ...

TODAY'S URBAN UNTOUCHABLES

Strikes, social conflict like the Reclaim the Streets campaign, cultural claims of rights to identity by workers at Magnet Kitchens in Darlington or Critchley Labels in Gwent, the long-term lock-out of the dockers on Merseyside, the demands of the jobless to be respected in their anti-JSA campaigns, all suggest a change in the climate of contemporary conflict in Britain.

This all seems to be becoming the new war of post-modernity – a war against politicians and policy-makers, against multinationals and globalisation, against casualised work and punishing the poor and jobless, against the culture of the market-place and the market-makers.

URBAN ETHNIC CLEANSING

Last year in a video made by Ken Loach, Doreen McNally of Women on the Waterfront said: "They are trying to destroy our *culture*!" This is the new ethnic cleansing being carried out by governments and big business against the peoples of this world, but because it is commercial and mediated by markets and

locked the dockers out almost two years ago and brought in cheap casual labour. What is happening to the dockers is a symptom of what is being done by the government to the jobless under the JSA and Welfare to Work schemes. For two years Groundswell, the independent network of unemployed groups and claimant unions, has been waging a struggle (recorded in the columns of *Freedom*) to uphold the dignity of the unemployed. The Edinburgh claimants section of Groundswell even invented the 'Three Strikes' weapon to combat harassment of the dole queue.

At Darlington the workers of Magnet Kitchens have been on strike for a year. There, when the company Beresford took over in 1993, they tried to de-skill the workforce and cut pay. In 1996 the firm made £10 million

see also 'Pals of the Paparazzi' on page 3

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has not yet been incorporated. Anarchists, as the Jews of the body politic of British society, are the best placed to fight the ethnic cleansing cultural vandals of New Labour and the business managers. Like the Jew, the anarchist has one foot inside the culture and one in the camp of the outsiders – the untouchables. That is why in a seemingly post-modern situation of cultural flux, anarchism is still the one political force which still has some credibility on the radical left of British politics.

Arturo Ui

DOUBLE-TAKE LOOKALIKES

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More recently Doreen McNally, in the monthly paper *Action*, commenting on the Liverpool dockers' dispute wrote: "Over the last 22 months many people have said to us 'why are you doing this, it doesn't make any sense?' The reason is tradition and a sense of history. Every one of us can remember the struggles of our fathers. Our roots go right down below the belly of the Mersey, we don't give up that easily."

FIGHTING SOCIAL EXCLUSION

The government has a stake in the Mersey Docks & Harbour Board, the company which locked the dockers out almost two years ago and brought in cheap casual labour. What is happening to the dockers is a symptom of what is being done by the government to the jobless under the JSA and Welfare to Work schemes. For two years Groundswell, the independent network of unemployed groups and claimant unions, has been waging a struggle (recorded in the columns of *Freedom*) to uphold the dignity of the unemployed. The Edinburgh claimants section of Groundswell even invented the 'Three Strikes' weapon to combat harassment of the dole queue.

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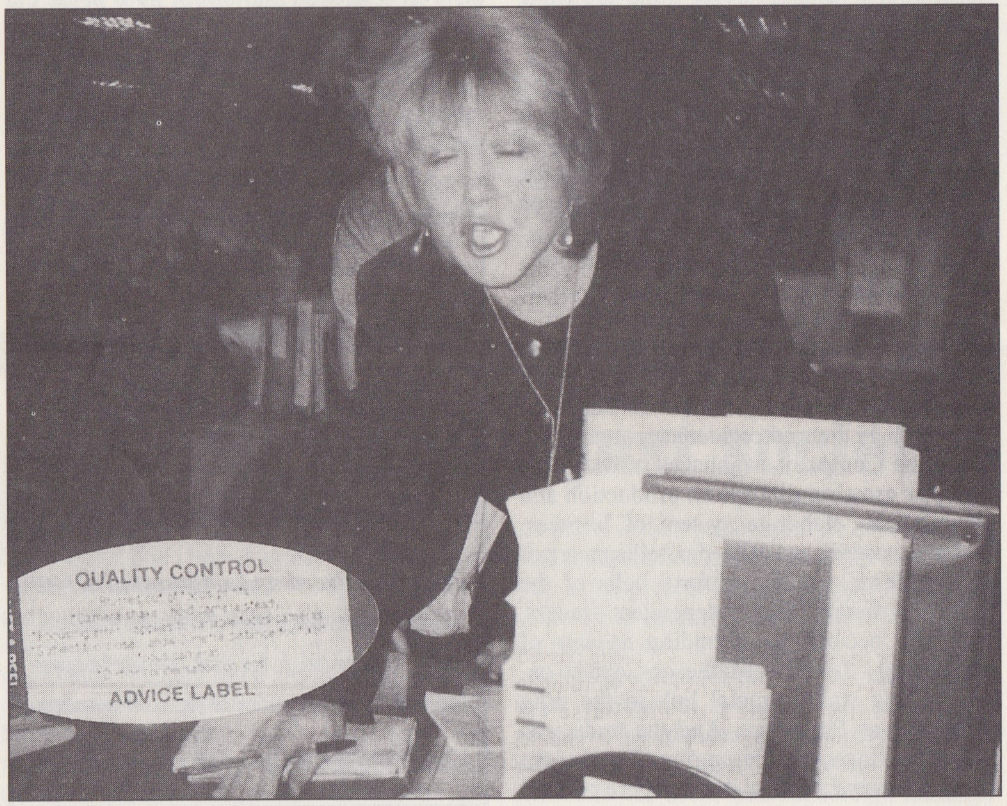

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on page 3

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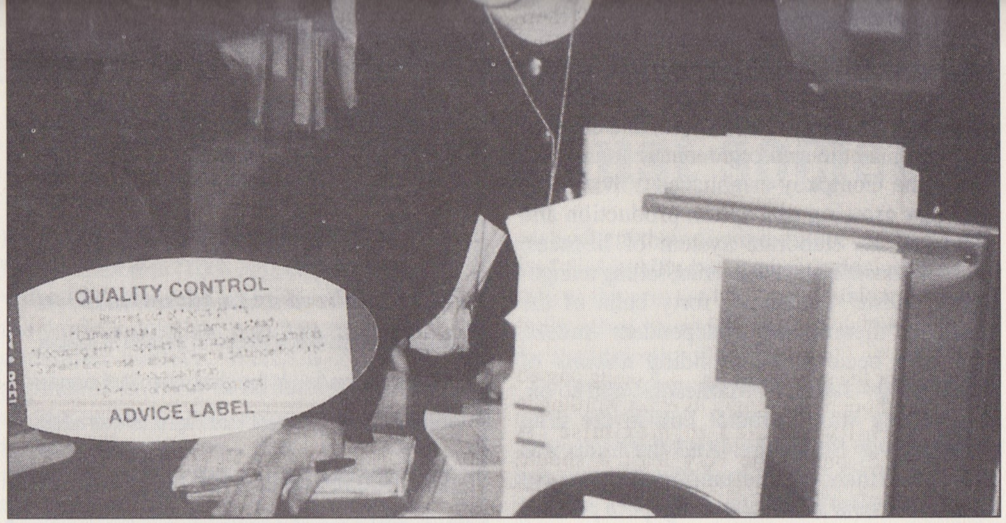
The Welfare State Network (WSN) and Unison's Liverpool section hope to unite the working class behind the Campaign for Free Trade Unions. Good luck to them if they think they can pull it off, but their own paper, *Action for Health and Welfare*, records that "Unison's leader have disgracefully gone against the wishes of the women [at Hillingdon Hospital] and withdrawn support from the dispute because the women do not want to accept the offer the company, Pall Mall, has made".

At the recent conference of the Transport & General Workers' Union *Action* reports: "I have just returned from the TGWU conference where I witnessed the most amazing attempted stick-up by the union executive ever". The *Action* correspondent then goes on to describe how the union executive tried to bulldoze through their statement about the Liverpool dockers' dispute, against the wishes of the conference majority.

These union bosses, and the Welfare State Network themselves, all belong to the culture of modernity. The new urban untouchables – the jobless, the Liverpool dockers and other locked-out workers – are victims of the system of which New Labour, the unions and the Marxist WSN are a part.

If social exclusion and the notion of the untouchability in contemporary society is to be combated, it requires a social force which



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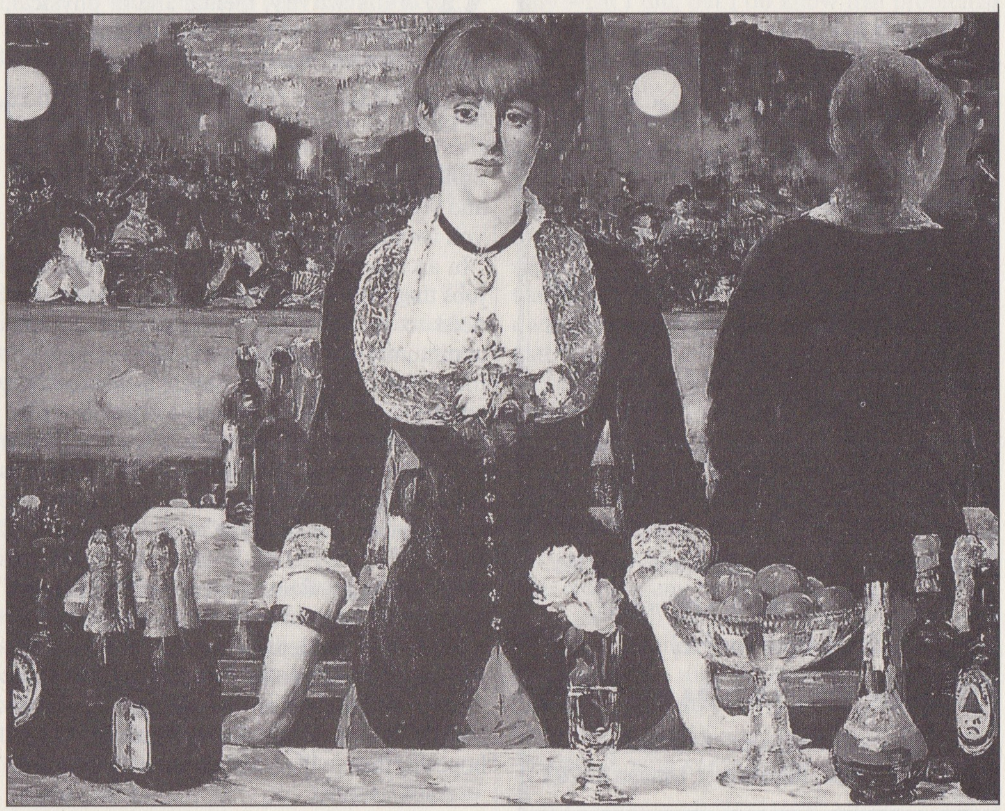

— ABOVE THE PARAPETS —

THE DRUG PUSHERS

In quick succession, Britain has been awash this summer with two outpourings of post-imperial blather. First Hong Kong, handed back to the Chinese. Now India and Pakistan, fifty years on from when the sub-continent was handed back to its own people. Interestingly enough, an element of partition was involved in both transfers. I am not speaking of the division of Hong Kong's people between those worthy of entry into Britain (the tiny minority) and those who will not be able to escape whatever fate the Chinese government chooses to inflict on them (the overwhelming majority), though that is a scandal of some significance. What was little remarked on during the Hong Kong season was that only one part of the territory was due to be handed back to China in 1997 – Hong Kong island itself was theoretically British in perpetuity, having been wrested from China by an unequal treaty, at the point of a gunship, in 1842. So the people of a sovereign British territory not due to be rejoined to its original state were subjected to reunification with that state without any form of consultation or even a single lock on constitutional change, never mind the triple lock which has been granted the Unionists in northern Ireland (the triple lock being that an agreement had to pass the political parties, a referendum in the North, *and* the British [but not the Irish] Parliament). So the return of Hong Kong casts an interesting light on the negotiations about to start on 15 September on Northern Ireland's future.

There is another connection between India and Hong Kong which is much more concrete. Hong Kong was seized during the course of a war fought in order to preserve the right of British smugglers to push drugs in the Middle

out in 1881: "India's interests in the matter are exactly identical with our own. She cannot afford to sacrifice an annual revenue of eight millions sterling at the bidding of sentimental fanatics and spurious philanthropy based on imaginary facts and false argumentation". India and other British colonies depended on opium to finance their administrations. US historian Carl Trocki suggests that the drug dependency of the Raj remained the situation until the end of the century and that "one might even make the argument that the decline of the empire really began when the British got out of the opium business" (*Opium and Empire: Chinese Society in Colonial Singapore, 1800-1910*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990, page 237.)

All of which adds a piquant flavour to the present hysterical reaction to the suggestion by MPs that there be a Royal Commission into substance abuse in Britain. It is argued that even to contemplate the decriminalisation of soft drugs is to legitimise drug use, which is unthinkable. Those who in the past played the part of the Cali cartel of Columbia on a far grander scale than the Colombians can dream of, who destroyed millions of lives in the Far East and who wrecked much of Indian agriculture in the process, who founded cities and ran an empire on the profits from drug pushing, now fear the effects of the scourge on their own society.

Milan Rai

New from Freedom Press

CULTURE AND

WELFARE-TO-WORK

The centre-piece of Gordon Brown's first Budget was the much-heralded welfare-to-work programme – the New Deal. As we now know, where 18-25 year olds who have been unemployed for six months or more are concerned, this 'new ladder of opportunity' consists of a thirteen-week 'gateway' induction period to prepare the participants for entry into the job market and the choice of one of four 'quality' options: a subsidised job with a private sector employer, a job with a voluntary sector employer, full-time study or a job in the new Environment Taskforce. Should any misguided claimant decline to take up any of these options the sanctions are punitive. Benefit will be completely withdrawn, first for two weeks, then for four and then indefinitely. Thus do we encounter the oft-repeated 'rights-entail-responsibilities' mantra in action. For the older long-term unemployed who have been on benefit for over two years, employers will be offered a £75 a week subsidy to take them on for six months. The package also includes measures to assist single parents and people claiming incapacity benefit who want to work to get back into the job market.

You don't have to search far to find sceptics of the New Deal. Writing in *The Observer*, Will Hutton noted that "the welfare-to-work programme ... is hampered by its poverty". For the long-term unemployed, £80 million has been earmarked from the windfall tax per year for four years, which will mean that only 40,000 long-term unemployed people will be able to benefit from the £75 a week employer subsidy. To put this into perspective, in Brighton and Hove alone 4,162 people have been unemployed for over two years, representing 10.5% of the total number of people who can benefit from the scheme in the whole country. Hutton suggests that at £700 million a year for four years the money

on maintaining a certain minimum level of unemployment to contain inflation". The government is committing to lowering inflation, and yet getting more people back into work will risk pushing inflation up. In fact in *The Financial Times* Samuel Brittan actually suggested that "the UK is probably now, in a macro-economic sense, at full employment".

Full employment, in terms of current economic thinking at least, is no longer possible and so there is something slightly hollow in the rhetoric of Gordon Brown when he says that "when they [young people] sign on for benefit they will be signing up for work". You cannot, as Grieve Smith says, introduce "measures to encourage particular groups of the unemployed to look for jobs unless there are more jobs available".

It is in this light that the punitive sanctions to be meted out to recalcitrant claimants must be seen. Welfare-to-work measures couched in the rhetoric of rights and responsibilities are aimed at what is perceived as public opinion, specifically at the Middle-Englanders, whether or not they exist, who New Labour credit with their landslide victory in the election. It also, of course, chimes with the agenda of business. Government, as capital's poodle, promotes flexibility – for which, as usual, read insecure conditions and poor pay – and intervenes as little as possible in the workings of the economy. Once, however, the economic system cannot be criticised, the only possible area for action is in training and the blame for not getting jobs must lie with the feckless unemployed. The argument which calls for 'responsibility', despite its sweet reasonableness, when applied to the poor, the marginalised and the disadvantaged, is a strategy to hide the real injustices inherent in the workings of the market system. The young unemployed have a 'right' to a place on the welfare-to-work programme and the people between those worthy of entry into Britain (the tiny minority) and those who will not be able to escape whatever fate the Chinese government chooses to inflict on them (the overwhelming majority), though that is a scandal of some significance. What was little remarked on during the Hong Kong season was that only one part of the territory was due to be handed back to China in 1997 – Hong Kong island itself was theoretically British in perpetuity, having been wrested from China by an unequal treaty, at the point of a gunship, in 1842. So the people of a sovereign British territory not due to be rejoined to its original state were subjected to reunification with that state without any form of consultation or even a single lock on constitutional change, never mind the triple lock which has been granted the Unionists in northern Ireland (the triple lock being that an agreement had to pass the political parties, a referendum in the North, *and* the British [but not the Irish] Parliament). So the return of Hong Kong casts an interesting light on the negotiations about to start on 15 September on Northern Ireland's future.

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CULTURE AND ANARCHISM

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Furthermore, of the 250,000 young people who will be levered back into employment, it has been estimated by the National Economic Research Associates that as many as 50% would have found a job without the scheme's help and that 20% will gain employment at the expense of other people already in work as employers take advantage of the subsidies. This would leave only 30% of jobs which will actually be 'new' jobs created by the scheme, a figure which is a lot less impressive than the headline soundbite would suggest.

While these doubts concentrate on the drawbacks of the scheme itself, John Grieve Smith writing in *The Guardian* poses more fundamental questions about the potential of the welfare-to-work programme to do anything more than scratch the surface of the problem of youth and long-term unemployment. He suggests that there is a basic conflict between the government's stated aim of he says that "when they [young people] sign on for benefit they will be signing up for work". You cannot, as Grieve Smith says, introduce "measures to encourage particular groups of the unemployed to look for jobs unless there are more jobs available".

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Yet because of the contradictions which abound in New Labour's economic policy there is the real danger that claimants will be dragooned through the offered opportunities only to be deposited back onto the dole queue after six months because there are no jobs to be had. The government might get a few brownie points for not tolerating the feckless, lazy, stay-in-bed, bad attitude young – and no doubt some young people, one hopes quite a lot, will find work through the scheme – but what it doesn't do is go anywhere near the real root of the problem.

Solutions to the very real problem of youth and long-term unemployment – with all its attendant effects of social exclusion and marginalisation, loss of self-esteem and poverty – will require more imagination and radical action than the New Deal promises, wedded as it is to the interests of business, that is to say, as always, to the rich whose affluence would be

WHY WORK? WHY NOT?

Why Work?

Arguments for the Leisure Society

Work is activity, mental and/or physical, and if you enjoy what you are doing – irrespective of the financial return, if any – surely there is no reason for not doing it as long as you wish to. Quite a different kettle of fish is a job which you have been more or less and Hong Kong which is much more concrete. Hong Kong was seized during the course of a war fought in order to preserve the right of British smugglers to push drugs in the Middle Kingdom. Drugs grown in India, in Bengal to be precise. In the mid-eighteenth century, the East India Company established a monopoly of poppy growing and opium production and organised an elaborate system of licences, advances, auctions and deliveries, selling mango-wood 'chests' containing forty balls of the opium to theoretically independent traders, men who became the founding *taipans* of Hong Kong – Jardines, Mathesons, and so on. Hong Kong was a crucial link in the drug trade, as was Singapore. And the trade was crucial in financing the empire. The *Straits Times Overland Journal* in Singapore pointed

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Duncan Hunt

WHY WORK? WHY NOT?

Why Work?
Arguments for the Leisure Society

has just been reprinted for the fourth time. It contains classic essays by Bertrand Russell, William Morris and Peter Kropotkin, contemporary articles by George Woodcock, Dennis Pym, John Hewetson, Tony Gibson and many more, plus six double-page drawings by Clifford Harper, edited by Vernon Richards with an eighteen page introduction and fifteen articles on 'Production for Use versus Production for Profit'.

210 pages   ISBN 0 900384 25 5   £4.95

Freedom Press
84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX

Work is activity, mental and/or physical, and if you enjoy what you are doing – irrespective of the financial return, if any – surely there is no reason for not doing it as long as you wish to. Quite a different kettle of fish is a job which you have been more or less obliged to take because you needed the money and you haven't been able to get the work that you would like to do.

In an anarchist society there would be both jobs that most of us would not like to have but need to be done and are important for the community's well-being, and those that we as individuals enjoy doing. Surely in an anarchist society would we not be only too glad to share the valuable chores so long as we were able to also enjoy doing the work which gave us a different kind of satisfaction. In such a society – where the daily hours of work would be less than half of the EU 48-hour week that neither this, nor the previous, government will accept – everybody would have ample time not only to share the 'unpleasant' and useful tasks but feel 'good' about doing them because we have plenty of time to do the things that really absorb our mental and physical interests. And I hope that there will also be plenty of time for fun.

Libertarian

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The Tradition of Workers' Control
by Geoffrey Ostergaard

Workers' control of industry, a phrase coined by the Guild Socialists, recalls the libertarian aspirations of the first rebels against the slavery inherent in the capitalist mode of production. As Geoffrey Ostergaard shows, libertarian socialism is not dead. There are workers in Britain who own and control their workplaces, and although this movement of workers' control in industry is not large, it is flourishing.

ISBN 0 900384 91 3   160 pages   £6.95
(post free inland, add 10% p&p overseas)

COMPUTER CLOUTS CLAIMANTS …

BURNLEY DOLE JEOPARDY

Burnley dole has come up with a good wheeze for firing the jobless off benefits. It's called 'Computeritis'. It means every dogsbody in the dole queue in Burnley Job Centre has to apply for at least one job a week on the dole computer. It doesn't matter that you have spent your days combing the streets looking for a job, or that your eyesight is giving in from perusing the job ads in the *Burnley Express*, or that you've got writer's cramp through filling in application forms, at Burnley dole you have got to try for at least one job on the computer. No wonder the Employment Service computers keep breaking down – it must be because of them overheating owing to over-use by Burnley.

It seems that all the Job Seeker's Agreements in Burnley insist that all the claimants have to apply for a job a week on the computer. In this respect it seems that Burnley dole is one on its own in the whole of Britain.

Burnley dole became notorious earlier this year when the manageress Mrs Duffy had a fight with a press photographer from *Freedom* who took her picture.

This boss has a reputation for docking the dole of local claimants.

A survey of claimants by Burnley Benefit Action in May and June shows that while 34% of those interviewed had to apply for one job on the computer a week, 63% had to put in for two or more jobs a week on the dole computer.

DOCKING THE DOLE

Dole-docking was prevalent at Mrs Duffy's bureau. Burnley Benefit Action found that of the just over a hundred claimants they sampled, just under a third (31%) had had their money stopped since the JSA was brought in last October. Of these 7% had had it stopped for one week, 55% for two weeks and 35% for over two weeks.

This compares with 29.6% in Oxford who had been suspended from benefits or threatened with suspension. In the Oxford survey many (27%) of the claimants were either threatened or sanctioned for voluntarily leaving work. The Burnley results seem significantly worse because the Oxford figure includes the threat to sanction, while Burnley's figure is actual benefit withdrawal.

Figures released in Oxford by the Employment Service show that there were 799 referrals to adjudication for possible suspension of benefit. Of these 614 were for voluntarily leaving work. The Oxford study says: "The voluntarily leaving work sanction is perhaps one of the more draconian within the legislation [JSA], since it often occurs following a dispute with an employer over wages or conditions, with an employee being sacked for alleged misconduct".

But how many of those who had their money stopped under the JSA appealed? Neither the Burnley nor the Oxford study pursued this point, but it seems that few are appealing the decisions at tribunals. Thus dole workers at Burnley, who get a bonus for throwing folk off benefit, are taking advantage of the weak and less competent claimants. Yet when appeals are made they are often won.

Some of the anti-JSA groups are planning to issue a leaflet urging people to appeal. There is a possibility that the Employment Service in the long run may withdraw the right of claimants to appeal to tribunals.

— COPY DEADLINE —

The next issue of Freedom will be dated 20th September, and the last day for copy intended for this issue will be first post on Thursday 11th September

Union and Ruskin College.

At Oxford 43.1% claimed dole staff were unhelpful "some of the time". It was stated that "there would still appear to be a reasonable residue of goodwill towards Employment Service staff, but if the legislation is applied more stringently then there could well be more problems".

The Burnley study, conducted later, seems to show that the problems are growing for staff.

At Oxford it was shown that many claimants "will not apply for jobs that are perceived as low paid, because they would be worse off than they are on benefits and feel they would be unable to support their families, etc." Two-thirds of the sample (66.9%) said that low pay was an obstacle to finding work.

The Oxford study found "that Job Seekers' Allowance is achieving the aim of putting more pressure on claimants to actively seek work regardless of the pay or conditions attached". The government may see this as a success, but the Oxford study concludes: "People work not just to survive but also to enjoy a reasonable standard of living". If a job makes you worse off that "is widely perceived as an injustice, hence the refusal of claimants to take such work".

PALS OF THE PAPARAZZI

A group calling itself 'Pals of the Paparazzi Man' have decided to go for Denise Duffy. Mrs Duffy, manager of Burnley dole, seems to be running the show like a regime of terror since the JSA came in. Everyone seems to be condemned to queue each week to apply for a job on her computer. It's like a roll-call in prison.

It's a roll-call from hell. Some people have to apply for more than three jobs a week on this machine.

The 'Pals' are aware of the new stalking laws which may make 'Three Strikes' more Madam Duffy's photograph without a prior warning. More than one approach could lead to one falling foul of the stalking laws.

Posters and leaflets with Mrs Duffy's likeness are to be put out and put up around this Lancashire town in the coming weeks.

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This obsession of the policy-makers to cut unemployment figures regardless of the human consequences is a recipe for disaster.

Freedom Reporter

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But Mrs Duffy had already gained a reputation as a bit of a tough cookie, and she has continued to run the bureau with a rod of iron.

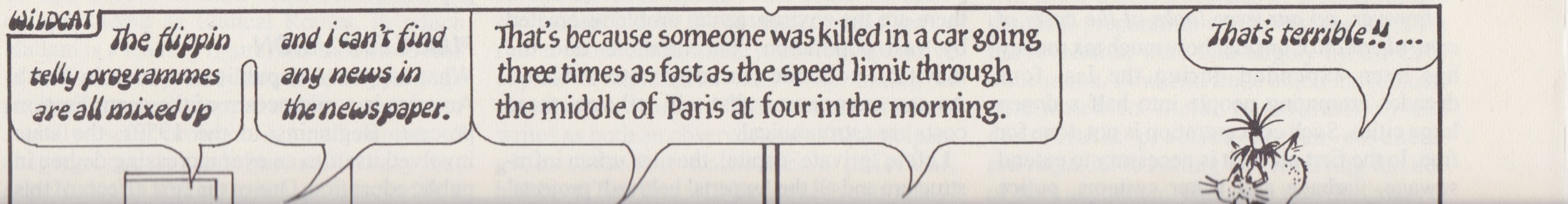
Unemployed Worker

DONATIONS

May to July 1997

Freedom Fortnightly Fighting Fund

Wolverhampton, JL, £6; Tregaron, AO, £1; Bristol, JN, £9; Beckenham, DP, £60; Lancaster, JA, £2.50; Oakham, MD, £1; Berlin, CC, £22; London, DB, 50p; Newport, NF, £10; Manchester, MG, £2; London, SR, £1.05; Darwin (Northern Territories), S, £3.25; Bristol, RS, £3; Newport, NF, £1.80; Edinburgh, AG, 90p; London, AMC, £2.25; Penzence, PMM, £30; London, AM, £20; Warrington, AO, £1.50;


WILDCAT
The flippin telly programmes are all mixed up
and i can't find any news in the newspaper.
That's because someone was killed in a car going three times as fast as the speed limit through the middle of Paris at four in the morning.
That's terrible !! ...

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Total = £229.00

1997 total to date = £683.00

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London, NC, £26; Wolverhampton, JL, £6; Bristol, JN, £8; Beckenham, DP, £60; Smoiville (USA), JT, £2; London, BT, £1; Fife, TL, £2; Plymouth, A, £5; Bristol, RS, £3.10; Newport, NF, £1.80; Hove, HC, £2; London, AMC, £2.50; Glasgow, JMcG, £2; Penzance, PMM, £30; Kendal, JD, £2; Winbourne, DM, £2; Glasgow, SU, £50; Poole, AMH, £6; Halifax, LS, £3; Stockbridge, SO, £2; Burton-on-Trent, PM, £3.65.

Total = £220.00

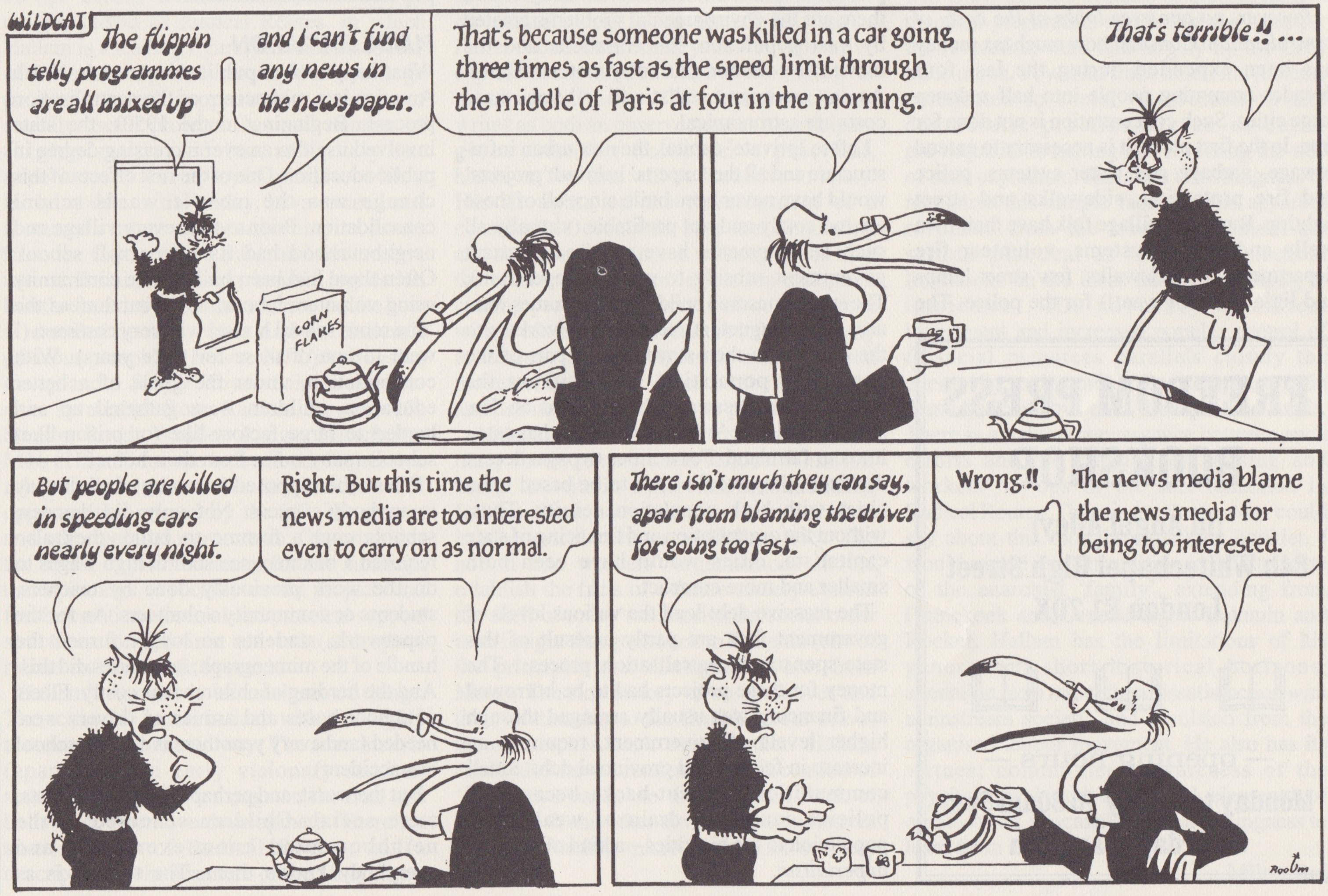
1997 total to date = £559.00

Raven Deficit Fund

Tregaron, AO, £1; Southport, VTE, £2; Bristol, JN, £9; Beckenham, DP, £60; Newport, NF, £10; Stockbridge, SO, £2; Alberta (BC), HB, £30.

Total = £114.00

1997 total to date = £368.00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The flippin telly programmes are all mixed up
and i can't find any news in the newspaper.
That's because someone was killed in a car going three times as fast as the speed limit through the middle of Paris at four in the morning.
That's terrible!! ...
CORN FLAKES
But people are killed in speeding cars nearly every night.
Right. But this time the news media are too interested even to carry on as normal.
There isn't much they can say, apart from blaming the driver for going too fast.
Wrong!!
The news media blame the news media for being too interested.
Rooum

— ANARCHIST NOTEBOOK —

RE-SETTLING RURAL ENGLAND

I was grabbing the opportunity to talk to a famous urban geographer and forecaster of likely futures about town and country in Britain in the next century.

Revolution came nowhere on his horizon: the environment would be shaped by the usual mix of factors – capitalist enterprise, government policies (in which it is notorious that different departments pursue contradictory aims) and public feeling, as reflected in the press, in the policies of professionally-run interest groups, and finally in direct action campaigning by groups of activists offering physical and personal resistance to the import of nuclear wastes for recycling, the export of infant calves for the veal trade or the destruction of trees and sites of what is seen as special scientific importance in the proposed building of by-pass roads or road upgrading.

Obviously we both enjoyed the sheer ingenuity of the protesters, deep in their own precarious tunnels or up in the sky in their tree-houses. And weren't there signs, both at the end of the last government and the beginning of the new one, of the abandonment of bits of the road-building programme? Was this governmental retreat a response to protest or simply a recognition that the cash was running out?

Those of us who actually *use* public transport are either old or young, for non-discounted fares are so huge that people actually owning a car find it cheaper to use it.

But my geographer friend was keen to point out that now that the motorway network exists anyway, the real enemy from the point of view of access to the land of Britain is not the road-builder but the farmer who for many decades has been the destroyer of wildlife in rural England. And the agricultural lobby is able to manipulate a vast allegedly 'rural' lobby to support its privileges.

This was evident in the great skill shown in organising the famous rally of around 100,000 people in Hyde Park on 10th July to defend 'rural values' against threats by the city dweller. The clever manipulators of all these country folk were, of course, the fox-hunting enthusiasts objecting to the prospect of a Parliamentary Bill outlawing their sport. No farmer that I know is keen on hunting – they find it simpler to shoot foxes without having their land ridden over. But my own neighbouring farmers make money out of selling shooting rights to stockbrokers, and fear that a shooting or fishing ban might be the next step.

There is not the slightest doubt that the real enemies of wildlife are not the road-builders (without regard for the environmental ethics of road-building) but the farmers, guardians of our rural traditions. At the Town and Country Planning Summer School at Lancaster in 1993, Sir Richard Body claimed that "the intensification of agriculture in the last 25 years has gone ahead faster and more furiously in the United Kingdom than in any other member state of the EC" and he read out to the assembled planners what he called "the woeful litany of statistics" of damage to the rural environment. These included:

- 130,000 miles of hedgerows ripped up.
- 40% of our ancient woodlands gone.
- Seven million acres of pastureland ploughed up.
- Over 95% of our wetlands drained.
- 875 miles of stone wall destroyed.
- 95% of the downlands of southern England gone.
- 180,000 acres of moorland ploughed up.

"Some of us", he said, "have made such an uproar about this agri-vandalism that in recent years we have seen the introduction of several schemes to undo the damage". It infuriates people like him (and me) that having paid subsidies for years to farmers to do all this damage in the name of increased output, we are now "paying the farmer to manage the countryside and thus protect the rural environment".

But quite apart from the farming lobby there is a huge accumulation of opinion and influence, lobbying as the Council for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE). Its national pronouncements may present acceptable opinions, but at a local and regional level it is the voice of NIMBYism. A few years ago, when the government's department issued its publication *Quality in Town and Country*, the CPRE response was to urge new approaches "to stem the out-migration of people and jobs from the towns and cities to the countryside". I don't hear criticism of the agricultural industry which, far more than movements of population, has been responsible for the destruction of other species. Britain has 100,000 acres of nature reserve but half a million acres of domestic gardens, and it is in these human habitats that rare species survive, not in the pesticided holy acres of rural England. Any ornithologist and any enthusiast for insects, rare small mammals or wild flowers, knows that churchyards large and small are favourite habitats since they were spared the fate of agricultural land.

The point I am making is that the arguments for protecting those precious rural habitats are usually a smokescreen for the protection of the habitats of the privileged who don't use public transport, who don't use the surviving village shop and whose children don't attend the threatened village school. But they are immensely active in the village preservation society since, as the late George Wibberley explained many years ago, they "want their particular village to stay as it was when they decided to move there".

The valuable insight that I gathered from my geographer friend, with his capacity for gathering and interpreting official statistics, was that in 1995 in England the owners of 544,900 hectares of farmland were being paid for growing nothing on them under the terms of the European Union's agricultural policy and that this was, as he put it, "three times the amount of land needed to accommodate all forecast urban development over the coming quarter century".

I'm convinced that there really is a conspiracy to exclude the poor from rural England, cleverly disguised as a concern for the environment.

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THE COSTS OF CENTRALISATION

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THE COSTS OF CENTRALISATION

Forty years ago the inhabitants of the small fishing villages of Newfoundland were forced to move into larger centres. The government claimed the move was necessary because the costs of social services were "too expensive to administer in isolated areas". Today the provincial and federal governments are shutting down schools, hospitals and post offices in small communities across Canada. The reason? These facilities are 'too expensive' to maintain. Villagers say these shut-downs are the final death-blow to their communities, which may well be true.

However, no one ever looks at the costs of centralisation. Consider how much tax money has been expended during the last four decades cramming people into half a dozen large cities. Such concentration is not done for free. In the first place, it is necessary to extend sewage, garbage and water systems, police and fire protection, sidewalks and street lighting. Rural and village folk have their own wells and septic systems, volunteer fire departments, no sidewalks, few street lamps and little need (or want!) for the police. The costs of providing these services to the expanded urban areas runs into many thousands of millions of dollars. The growing urban population had to be moved to and from work, requiring the extension of transit systems and the building of expressways requiring countless dollars. The cost of social breakdown has to be included, since big city people are at least twice as likely to suffer from mental, social or family problems than rural people. Crime is at least three or four times greater in the major urban areas. Both these problems cost us a fortune annually. Then there are the environmental problems created by vast population concentrations and the inevitable pollution caused by motor vehicles. As any environmentalist will tell you, these costs are astronomical.

Left to 'private' capital, the new urban infrastructure and all the 'experts' beloved 'projects' would have never been built, since all of these are too costly and not profitable (virtually all such developments have required constant government subsidy to continue operation). The state-sponsored building programmes were also a job magnet, attracting rural workers to the cities who then stayed on as part of the expanding population. And without the state-built expressways there would be few suburbs and little 'urban sprawl' that has eaten into our farmland. For utilities to pay a decent dividend, they would have to be based upon

FREEDOM PRESS
BOOKSHOP

The move towards centralisation was backed culturally and ideologically. From the 1920s – when the process really got going – to the late 1960s – when the first rebellious noises were heard – popular culture and the media glorified 'bigness' and 'expertise' and ridiculed provincial ways. (Can you think of one movie or novel produced during this period which did not denigrate small town or rural life?)

People who really want to cut the costs of government should consider encouraging population decentralisation.

PUBLIC EDUCATION

What happened to public education in North America is a microcosm of the centralisation process. Beginning in the 1950s, the state involved itself to an ever increasing degree in public education. One of the first effects of this change was the move towards school consolidation. Prior to this, every village and neighbourhood had its own small school. Often these had been built by the community using volunteer labour. In the rural areas the 'one room school house' was very common (I went to one of these for three years). With consolidation, under the guise of a better education, children were gathered up and herded to large factory-like (or prison-like) schools many miles from their homes.

Where the supposed economy of all this lay

familiar with each child as with his or her own. Since they are neighbours, parents and teachers are also well acquainted. In the big schools this intimacy cannot exist and alienation results. With alienation comes 'peer group pressure'. This is only a minor factor in the small school, but becomes important in the factory school. Lacking intimacy, children form cliques, gangs and sub-cultures which force conformity upon their members. The most violent and aggressive come to dominate the school-yard. Children who don't 'fit in' are harassed. Inter-generational conflict develops since children relate to themselves far more than to parents or adults (whereas in the small local school, students are more influenced by parents, adult neighbours and teachers).

These problems are exacerbated by the mass media, who seize upon and promote these often anti-social attitudes as a way of marketing products to a juvenile audience. The education bureaucracy attempts to overcome the social problems it has created by hiring counsellors, psychologists, security guards and creating classes in 'guidance', sex education and race relations. All of these cost money and do little to overcome the difficulties created by centralisation.

We have a mass of young people who are immature, emotionally injured and have a host of self-destructive tendencies. The end product of these psychological and emotional disturbances is delinquency, teenage pregnancy, drug usage, dropping out and a general under-achievement in life. It is impossible to calculate the cost to society of

THE COSTS OF CENTRALISATION

Forty years ago the inhabitants of the small fishing villages of Newfoundland were forced to move into larger centres. The government claimed the move was necessary because the costs of social services were "too expensive to administer in isolated areas". Today the provincial and federal governments are shutting down schools, hospitals and post offices in small communities across Canada. The reason? These facilities are 'too expensive' to maintain. Villagers say these shut-downs are the final death-blow to their communities, which may well be true.

However, no one ever looks at the costs of centralisation. Consider how much tax money has been expended during the last four decades cramming people into half a dozen large cities. Such concentration is not done for free. In the first place, it is necessary to extend sewage, garbage and water systems, police and fire protection, sidewalks and street lighting. Rural and village folk have their own wells and septic systems, volunteer fire departments, no sidewalks, few street lamps and little need (or want!) for the police. The costs of providing these services to the expanded urban areas runs into many thousands of millions of dollars. The growing urban population had to be moved to and from work, requiring the extension of transit systems and the building of expressways requiring countless dollars. The cost of social breakdown has to be included, since big city people are at least twice as likely to suffer from mental, social or family problems than rural people. Crime is at least three or four times greater in the major urban areas. Both these problems cost us a fortune annually. Then there are the environmental problems created by vast population concentrations and the inevitable pollution caused by motor vehicles. As any environmentalist will tell you, these costs are astronomical.

Left to 'private' capital, the new urban infrastructure and all the 'experts' beloved 'projects' would have never been built, since all of these are too costly and not profitable (virtually all such developments have required constant government subsidy to continue operation). The state-sponsored building programmes were also a job magnet, attracting rural workers to the cities who then stayed on as part of the expanding population. And without the state-built expressways there would be few suburbs and little 'urban sprawl' that has eaten into our farmland. For utilities to pay a decent dividend, they would have to be based upon cities with high population density. Thus, without the organisation and financing of state capitalism, cities would have been both smaller and more compact.

The massive debt load the various levels of government face are partly a result of this state-sponsored centralisation process. The money for these projects had to be borrowed and financing was usually arranged through higher levels of government, requiring an increase in federal and provincial debt. Small communities face cut-backs because of policies causing a drain of wealth and population to the big cities – a kind of *internal imperialism.*

The move towards centralisation was backed culturally and ideologically. From the 1920s – when the process really got going – to the late 1960s – when the first rebellious noises were heard – popular culture and the media glorified 'bigness' and 'expertise' and ridiculed provincial ways. (Can you think of one movie or novel produced during this period which did not denigrate small town or rural life?)

People who really want to cut the costs of government should consider encouraging population decentralisation.

PUBLIC EDUCATION

What happened to public education in North America is a microcosm of the centralisation process. Beginning in the 1950s, the state involved itself to an ever increasing degree in public education. One of the first effects of this change was the move towards school consolidation. Prior to this, every village and neighbourhood had its own small school. Often these had been built by the community using volunteer labour. In the rural areas the 'one room school house' was very common (I went to one of these for three years). With consolidation, under the guise of a better education, children were gathered up and herded to large factory-like (or prison-like) schools many miles from their homes.

Where the supposed economy of all this lay is anybody's guess. Not only did the new schools cost a fortune to build, they also required a maintenance staff at high wages to do the work previously done by teachers, students or community volunteers. As for the paperwork, students no longer turned the handle of the mimeograph, secretaries did this. And the herding of children was costly. Fleets of school buses and armies of drivers were needed (and every year there is a tragic school bus accident).

But the worst, and perhaps the greatest costs, were social. Children schooled in the neighbourhood know everybody and everybody knows them. The teacher is as Since they are neighbours, parents and teachers are also well acquainted. In the big schools this intimacy cannot exist and alienation results. With alienation comes 'peer group pressure'. This is only a minor factor in the small school, but becomes important in the factory school. Lacking intimacy, children form cliques, gangs and sub-cultures which force conformity upon their members. The most violent and aggressive come to dominate the school-yard. Children who don't 'fit in' are harassed. Inter-generational conflict develops since children relate to themselves far more than to parents or adults (whereas in the small local school, students are more influenced by parents, adult neighbours and teachers).

These problems are exacerbated by the mass media, who seize upon and promote these often anti-social attitudes as a way of marketing products to a juvenile audience. The education bureaucracy attempts to overcome the social problems it has created by hiring counsellors, psychologists, security guards and creating classes in 'guidance', sex education and race relations. All of these cost money and do little to overcome the difficulties created by centralisation.

We have a mass of young people who are immature, emotionally injured and have a host of self-destructive tendencies. The end product of these psychological and emotional disturbances is delinquency, teenage pregnancy, drug usage, dropping out and a general under-achievement in life. It is impossible to calculate the cost to society of these social problems, which are at least in part attributable to the consolidation of the schools.

A free society based upon mutual aid can only grow from a healthy social foundation. When this is no longer present, when people are atomised and nihilistic, the tendency is to desire a strong state as an artificial means to replace the missing communal life. Among the most alienated, fascism and religious and political cultism are attractive and pessimistic; world-hating, scapegoating ideologies become pervasive. Thus, the centralisation of education has undermined the potential for development of a libertarian society.

Larry Gambone

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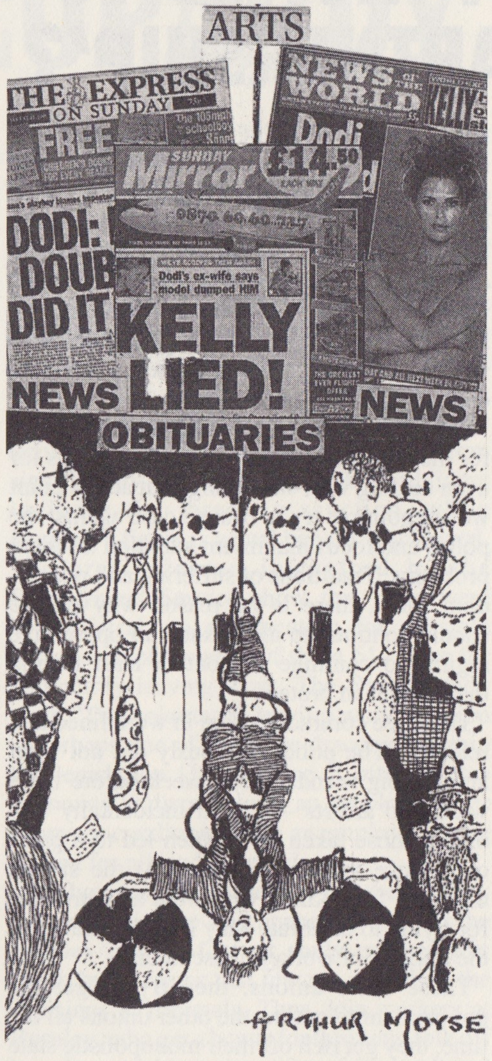
LAUGH? I URINATED MYSELF!

Laughter is always suspect for it demands an answer to 'why are you laughing and who are you laughing at?' and having ascertained that one is not the victim then one can join in the baying. At its most basic it is the ancient and time-honed Prat Fall wherein a, preferably, elderly and crippled man or woman falls back onto their arse losing dignity and blood. It reached its apotheosis with the Victorian cartoonists' sadistic class-ridden skilled drawings, and its nadir in the mass produced children's comics of the 1920s.

Humour may, within our lifetime, have appeared to become more sophisticated with a content that does not offend the humanities and owes more to the publishers, the editors and the social political mores of the day for, so I am told, one can still raise a laugh in the wine bar by shouting over the heads 'Up the workers' or 'I listened to Wagner on the TV last night' providing that Wagner is pronounced with a 'W' and not a 'V'.

Time and time again professional comedians claim that while young they used humour as a method of protection from their social group, but the small tragedy of that is that they reach a stage where they turn that black humour onto themselves and they publicly ridicule themselves so that the bully or fist or tongue might not harm them. The tame Jew, Uncle Tom, the factory comedian, the pathetic clown hamming it on the edge of the grave, 'Alas poor Yorick, I knew him well' and pissed into his open grave. I was fortunate that I did not fear the youthful mob – with them, maybe? – but I earned my applause by using my slight artistic talent to produce, on demand, obscene, nay filthy, drawings and one can accept that in the canon of my early works they could be catalogued as 'comic drawings'. Humour has no absolute except that somewhere along the line someone is hurt. I am not one to cry let there be 'no more cakes and ale and dancing those who will seek to analyse 'the joke' and kill laughter dead, for there is no easier way to silence the room than to explain 'why did the chicken cross the road'. Howard Jacobson* studied under the humourless Cambridge don F.R. Leavis, who did for the English novel that which Jack the Ripper did for the reputation of London's East End, and has published 258 pages "from the ridiculous to the sublime" that ranges from Wright's claim that the horseshoe carved on buildings was the female organ and as its original meaning is now forgotten a real horseshoe is now nailed up. PC, PC where are you. I am always happy with historical facts garnished with sexual shy-making innuendoes and references to the outgoing functions of the lower part of the body, but Jacobson ("The most dangerously funny writer in the English language", *Sunday Times*) kills what should have been a good guilty page-flicking smut-hunt bedtime read into the driest of boring academic 258 pages. He quotes Bernard Manning with approval as he declaims: "They say you are what you eat – I'm a cunt", writing that "comedy in a club like Bernard Manning's lances the boil. It enables the pus to run". But whose boil and whose pus?

Fundamentalists of the ersatz left, no matter what their philosophical pretensions may be, are never given to humour for these are the ones who, in any elected or unelected office, ban the comic seaside postcards, censor children's comics, find religious, racial and sexual connotations in the most simplistic of drawings, writings or remarks, and demand that the physical law shall enforce their demand for the seaside postcard and Bernard Manning to be silenced. In a free assembly one listens, views or passes by. One cannot translate physical feelings, only emotions, which is what the visual arts or the spoken words do, and for that reason we can watch the actor of the clown mime hysterical body-shaking laughter or the agony of physical



his arse, but we cannot feel the pain. So we giggle.

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in absolute disgust at the suggestion regarding their omission, one must shyly suggest that one could not mention the Second World War without a passing reference to Hitler.

Blake's "When I saw that rage was vain, / And to sulk would nothing gain, / Turning many a trick & wile / I began to soothe and smile" is our collective response to the foreman's sick-making humour.

There is a cottage industry churning out the deadly in-depth volumes regarding humour, preferably lavatorial, with the saving clause that 'I myself find little to amuse in it' and to wipe the smile off one's face one cannot do better than Cohen's translation of Rabelais's *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, funny it ain't. If one is interested in 'moral masochism' then, if we dislike each other, I can do no more than recommend Margaret Brenman's *Psychoanalytic Psychiatry and Psychology*, but for all that, in the end we are back to Freud's *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious* (Penguin Books, 1978). With a copy of that, complete with uncut pages, one could walk into any pub with that under one's arm and be the toast of the saloon bar searching the lavatory walls for wit and handing out analyses to anyone who will stand you a Tony Hancock pint of the 'true home-brewed, your genuine English bar-room slop, mate'.

Yet in all these failed attempts to find out why someone is laughing like a pig four rows in front in the theatre, 'Hamlet in the original', there is one man who flogged his way to glory. Sir Tom Normanton, the late Tory MP for Cheadle, believed and fought for his belief in the art and act of flogging, with hanging as a side-line. Tom was humour made manifest and, come the matter of flogging, yea even for the handicapped children, for as Tom stated, "I see no reason why any special legal protection should be given to the physically handicapped". All those pre-war comics of prefects and 'beaks' flogging trousers-down small boys found its champion in Flogger Tom, and the joke continued to live on from the comic pages of the *Boys Own Papers* on with the Victorian cartoonists' sadistic class-ridden skilled drawings, and its nadir in the mass produced children's comics of the 1920s.

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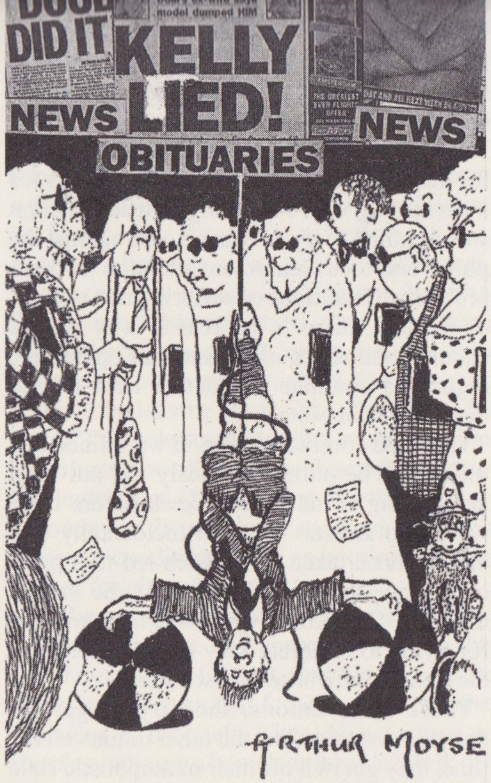

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Arthur Moyse

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* *Seriously Funny* by Howard Jacobson (Penguin Books, £20).

Constructive Provocation

All movements for social change revolve around the twin poles of opposition and construction. For those committed to workers' freedom, to democratic self-management of the workplace and of the economy, the huge gap between hope and reality can be deeply discouraging. There are, however, constructive opportunities even here. Roger Hallam, in his stimulating booklet *Anarchist Economics:*

co-ops across Britain. The federation of co-ops known as Radical Routes, in which Hallam is a leading figure, has mobilised tens of thousands of pounds, acquired several large properties and supported a number of socially-useful projects. A small number of (highly motivated but relatively inexperienced) unemployed people, with a fairly modest initial outlay, have created and

co-operatives in Spain, some useful thoughts on 'mental blocks to (continued) activism', a rather ponderous theory of 'co-operative capital accumulation' and a sprinkling of management theory. The fact that Hallam writes as both an observer *and* as a participant gives *Anarchist Economics* a practical, hands-on feel that will be attractive to many. His thoughts on the development of a

One of the most serious limitations of this study, however, is Hallam's disdainful and dismissive attitude to the labour movement. A serious investigation of the Spanish revolution will show that the decades of theoretical and practical preparation which laid the basis for the revolution were laid largely by the CNT trade union. Powerful trade union movements committed to social transformation and democratic practice are an essential pre-requisite to halting and reversing the tide of state capitalism. Hallam's unwillingness to recognise this simple fact, and his apparent catalogued as 'comic drawings'. Humour has no absolute except that somewhere along the line someone is hurt. I am not one to cry let there be 'no more cakes and ale and dancing on the village green', nay, nary 'for I have heard the chimes at midnight', admittedly with the help of a hearing aid.

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Hallam uses the adjective 'anarchist' in his title, he says, out of a desire to be provocative. Provocative both to those who accept "the 'liberal' capitalist state" as the best possible social arrangement, *and* to those 'traditional anarchists' who form the 'dogmatic', 'excessively negative', 'male dominated' and 'psychologically immature' anarchist establishment of Britain.

Hallam's challenge to the anarchist movement is both theoretical and practical. It centres around his experiences over the last ten years in forming, fostering, developing and inter-relating workers' and housing co-ops across Britain. The federation of co-ops known as Radical Routes, in which Hallam is a leading figure, has mobilised tens of thousands of pounds, acquired several large properties and supported a number of socially-useful projects. A small number of (highly motivated but relatively inexperienced) unemployed people, with a fairly modest initial outlay, have created and sustained a minor co-operative empire. Loans from the Co-operative Bank and the creative use of Britain's housing benefit legislation laid the foundation for this success – quite how is detailed in this essay and in Hallam's previous pamphlets *How to Set Up a Housing Co-op* and *A Simple Way to Solve Homelessness* (available from Radical Routes, 25a Stanley Road, Whalley Range, Manchester M16 8HS). These are indeed both impressive achievements in themselves and indications of opportunities missed by the left, the greens and other popular movements. Opportunities for social experimentation, for the financial underpinnings of socially-useful projects and for the creation of social and practical support structures for full-time activists (and others reliant on the benefit system).

Hallam's booklet is an amalgam of things. The economic aspect is dealt with in a highly abstract and schematic way. The anarchism is (apart from an early visionary section) severely practical – musings on the nuts and bolts of co-operative development. There's a short history of Radical Routes, and a description of the structure of the Mondragon co-operatives in Spain, some useful thoughts on 'mental blocks to (continued) activism', a rather ponderous theory of 'co-operative capital accumulation' and a sprinkling of management theory. The fact that Hallam writes as both an observer *and* as a participant gives *Anarchist Economics* a practical, hands-on feel that will be attractive to many. His thoughts on the development of a considerable economic base are stimulating and not unrealistic (much will depend on how the economy and state legislation change in coming years). This short book could be read with profit by many across the left, not merely anarchists, and by others in related social movements. It fully deserves the discussion and debate Hallam wishes to provoke.

At the same time *Anarchist Economics* has many flaws, some of them serious. While it is useful to write in a personal, unintimidating fashion, this is no reason to present your ideas in a historical vacuum, as Hallam does. The notion that workers' organisations should establish the facts of a future society even in the shell of today's authoritarian social order is an insight that goes back to Bakunin (one of the principles that distinguished him from Marx). The rich history of co-operatives and their relationship to the British labour movement stretches back even further. Hallam could also have broadened his discussion of 'alternative banks' to the Grameen Bank of Bangladesh and other development initiatives aimed at funding micro-projects of the very poor.

One of the most serious limitations of this study, however, is Hallam's disdainful and dismissive attitude to the labour movement. A serious investigation of the Spanish revolution will show that the decades of theoretical and practical preparation which laid the basis for the revolution were laid largely by the CNT trade union. Powerful trade union movements committed to social transformation and democratic practice are an essential pre-requisite to halting and reversing the tide of state capitalism. Hallam's unwillingness to recognise this simple fact, and his apparent revulsion from the labour movement are serious practical as well as theoretical limitations on the ideas that he is seeking to implement. His advocacy of ethical investment and increased popular control of financial resources parallels closely the attempt by trade unions, for example, to gain democratic control over their pension funds. There is a natural convergence between such efforts and the creation of housing and workers' co-ops of the sort federated in Radical Routes. There is much more one could say about this thought-provoking booklet. I would regard it as an addition to the literature of the anarchist 'family', extending from Pannekoek and Luxemburg to Bakunin and Rocker. Hallam has the limitations of his generation: short historical horizons, alienation *from* rather than dissatisfaction *with* mainstream society, and revulsion from the organised labour movement. He also has its virtues: commitment, awareness of the psychological and emotional elements of organisation, pragmatism and a willingness to learn from any quarter.

Milan Rai

— NEWS FROM THE X —

SO, WE'RE NOT INVITED TO THE 'SOCIAL PARTNERSHIP'?

On May Day in Moscow a really despicable scene happened during the unions' annual First of May parade. A group of anarchists and left radicals, marching in the column of the independent trade union Volya were attacked by the police on the orders of the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia.

Many left groups have long ago broken from the trade union's annual festivities; there is no question about their role as foot-servant to the criminal capitalist class. We hold our own independent festival or demonstration but still, we, like many others, tend to go to the larger demonstrations to meet with the workers and to offer them more radical alternatives than the trade union bosses. Many of us have participated in this May First demo before and we participated in the March 'strike' without any incident. On May Day, far fewer than usual showed up (all of seventeen people – how many people want to meet at 8:30?) and we had brought radical banners, but were saving the real raucous stuff for our demo. Much of our literature was for self-management and did not even mention anarchism. The most radical things were banners reading 'Death to the State and Capital' and 'We'll Take our Pay by Force'.

Obviously the 'organisers' of this demo (whom, by the way, we know *very well* and include some of our ex-comrades who became bureaucrats) had a problem with us being there from the very start and asked the police to clear us out. They can of course now 'innocently' claim that they didn't know what the police would do, that they didn't know that the police could beat or arrest us. The police came and starting beating and arresting people. Three of our comrades were taken to the infamous

friends have been beaten seriously) and several were violently beaten. Two of our comrades, Larisa and Nirmal, had to be hospitalised, suffering from injuries inflicted by the police. Both have sustained concussions from being beaten on the head with riot sticks, both were beaten in the kidneys. Larisa had to be hospitalised for a week and perhaps has suffered permanent damage as a result of her injuries.

Russia is a place where police brutality is par for the course and there are no precedents for even dealing with such things but at this point we are going to try to bring a case against the police and focus maximum attention on these problems. Traditions of suffering and martyrdom aside, there is no reason why people should continue to allow such an oppressive regime to continue without at least raising their voices in protest.

The three comrades taken in were fined and released. The police obviously did not want another big scandal. (The week before there were also arrests – Nirmal incidentally was one of those taken in – which led to a press conference and some noise.) At the station they met four Kurds who were also arrested for trying to celebrate May Day. So much for the holiday of workers' discontent.

These trade unions, they try to get the government to outlaw the other unions all the time, they get rich off their monopolistic state legacy, they are in this all for their political careers. Obviously we are now at full blown war with them.

We have no intention of going into social partnership with the bosses; these people have offered up the workers' heads on a platter. It's our job now to occupy the remaining heads, to

MAY DAY, TRUER TO SPIRIT

Despite these unpleasantries, we held our own demo outside of Gorky Park. The weather was gorgeous and we had good leaflets but unfortunately they had set up all sorts of carousels and stuff next to our demo and we looked, well a little clownish trying to have a serious demo there. Had we known... but no matter. About 40-45 people came, which was a considerable drop from last year, but, in general there is a more apathetic climate than last year. (The morning's demo drew only about a quarter of the amount that came to the March demo.) After the demo we walked around the city tearing down, detouring and destroying fascist leaflets. (They're here and they're there and they're everywhere.) We stopped at the new Kropotkin statue (well, actually it's Engels, but we were tired of looking at Engels standing at the beginning of the former Kropotkin street, so we changed it a little) and on Gogol Boulevard before heading to the Balaklava Club for the Victor Serge Library party. On the way we agitated people on the metro. (In the good sense and, probably, the other as well.) At Balaklava we celebrated by singing revolutionary anarchist songs from all over the world. Afterwards an anti-fascist concert was held in the abandoned Lenin Hills metro station. All in all, not a bad day, with the exception of the injuries to our friends. But we will try to answer that in kind.

NIZHNY

On 23rd March the second congress of Anarchists of the Nizhny Novgorod region was held. People from Nizhny, Derzhinsk and Pavlov na Oke came. They came, they sat, they had an agenda. The Nizhny anarchists passed a resolution that calls for the abolition of the post of governor (conveniently vacated by Baby Boy Boris Nemtsov) to be substituted by a confederation of municipal soviets of the Nizhny Novgorod region. Yikes! True, with people like Derzhinsk born fascist Eddy Limonov running for governor (he lost), this may seem like some alternative, but given the

good happened, there was a lot of bozofied stuff, fights, even one guy was murdered and his body torched. The people arrested for the murder, former members of the anarchist youth federation. Not pleasant stuff. I've been in the anarchist movement long enough to know that it's a waste of time to run a big article on what happened, that most anarchists can't deal with such things and others, well, they either don't care or are confused. Similarly, nobody in Russia is talking about this either. Apparently some people have smartened up a little though.

I'm not interested in getting people to join together if they have real differences but you can't help but notice a few things. Like how people with a good knowledge of radical theory, who tend to read a lot and have institute educations, are constantly using this to try to seem more authoritative on everything. As if an emotional response or empirical knowledge doesn't count for anything. Nothing wrong with reading and making criticism, but it depends on how obnoxious you are in doing it and whether your purpose in criticising is to dialogue with people and to try to get them to understand your point of view or whether you are trying to elevate yourself and humiliate your opponent (of course if your opponent is himself obnoxious, this is another story). And like how people who take part in a lot of protests often accuse others of being apolitical if they don't. And how so much judgement is made on you based on how you look and if you consume cool culture. Ego-maniacs fighting to be king of the anarchist jungle.

Well, that's what goes on – I'd get into more details except – well, I just don't want to. It may seem that I got a little side-tracked from the issue of the squat, but the real issue of the squat has more to do with interpersonal political nonsense than repression. Pretty soon the police won't have to ever send provocateurs to us – we'll find them ourselves.

PETERSBURG

the trade union's annual festivities; there is no question about their role as foot-servant to the criminal capitalist class. We hold our own independent festival or demonstration but still, we, like many others, tend to go to the larger demonstrations to meet with the workers and to offer them more radical alternatives than the trade union bosses. Many of us have participated in this May First demo before and we participated in the March 'strike' without any incident. On May Day, far fewer than usual showed up (all of seventeen people – how many people want to meet at 8:30?) and we had brought radical banners, but were saving the real raucous stuff for our demo. Much of our literature was for self-management and did not even mention anarchism. The most radical things were banners reading 'Death to the State and Capital' and 'We'll Take our Pay by Force'.

Obviously the 'organisers' of this demo (whom, by the way, we know *very well* and include some of our ex-comrades who became bureaucrats) had a problem with us being there from the very start and asked the police to clear us out. They can of course now 'innocently' claim that they didn't know what the police would do, that they didn't know that the police could beat or arrest us. The police came and starting beating and arresting people. Three of our comrades were taken to the infamous 108th precinct (where many of us or our week and perhaps has suffered permanent damage as a result of her injuries.

Russia is a place where police brutality is par for the course and there are no precedents for even dealing with such things but at this point we are going to try to bring a case against the police and focus maximum attention on these problems. Traditions of suffering and martyrdom aside, there is no reason why people should continue to allow such an oppressive regime to continue without at least raising their voices in protest.

The three comrades taken in were fined and released. The police obviously did not want another big scandal. (The week before there were also arrests – Nirmal incidentally was one of those taken in – which led to a press conference and some noise.) At the station they met four Kurds who were also arrested for trying to celebrate May Day. So much for the holiday of workers' discontent.

These trade unions, they try to get the government to outlaw the other unions all the time, they get rich off their monopolistic state legacy, they are in this all for their political careers. Obviously we are now at full blown war with them.

We have no intention of going into social partnership with the bosses; these people have offered up the workers' heads on a platter. It's our job now to occupy the remaining heads, to inspire them to bite the hands that bleed them.

they're there and they're everywhere.) We stopped at the new Kropotkin statue (well, actually it's Engels, but we were tired of looking at Engels standing at the beginning of the former Kropotkin street, so we changed it a little) and on Gogol Boulevard before heading to the Balaklava Club for the Victor Serge Library party. On the way we agitated people on the metro. (In the good sense and, probably, the other as well.) At Balaklava we celebrated by singing revolutionary anarchist songs from all over the world. Afterwards an anti-fascist concert was held in the abandoned Lenin Hills metro station. All in all, not a bad day, with the exception of the injuries to our friends. But we will try to answer that in kind.

NIZHNY

On 23rd March the second congress of Anarchists of the Nizhny Novgorod region was held. People from Nizhny, Derzhinsk and Pavlov na Oke came. They came, they sat, they had an agenda. The Nizhny anarchists passed a resolution that calls for the abolition of the post of governor (conveniently vacated by Baby Boy Boris Nemtsov) to be substituted by a confederation of municipal soviets of the Nizhny Novgorod region. Yikes! True, with people like Derzhinsk born fascist Eddy Limonov running for governor (he lost), this may seem like some alternative, but given the history of local soviets, and, more importantly, the history of anybody in post-Soviet Russia who's gone into politics at all, the best one could hope for is a kabal of bureaucrats - a collective corruption if you will - rather than the feudal model. It still would be interesting to hear what kind of councils they think are realisable in this area of 5-6 million people. Maybe a more radical solution would be to abolish the region of Nizhny Novgorod.

MOSCOW

On 11th March the squat on Ostozhenka street (near Kropotkin metro) was busted – not by cops even, but by fellow squatters. There's a lot to say about the incident, but this is one where I'm just going to keep my mouth shut and trash the article I wrote. In short, nothing

people with a good knowledge of radical theory, who tend to read a lot and have institute educations, are constantly using this to try to seem more authoritative on everything. As if an emotional response or empirical knowledge doesn't count for anything. Nothing wrong with reading and making criticism, but it depends on how obnoxious you are in doing it and whether your purpose in criticising is to dialogue with people and to try to get them to understand your point of view or whether you are trying to elevate yourself and humiliate your opponent (of course if your opponent is himself obnoxious, this is another story). And like how people who take part in a lot of protests often accuse others of being apolitical if they don't. And how so much judgement is made on you based on how you look and if you consume cool culture. Ego-maniacs fighting to be king of the anarchist jungle.

Well, that's what goes on – I'd get into more details except – well, I just don't want to. It may seem that I got a little side-tracked from the issue of the squat, but the real issue of the squat has more to do with interpersonal political nonsense than repression. Pretty soon the police won't have to ever send provocateurs to us – we'll find them ourselves.

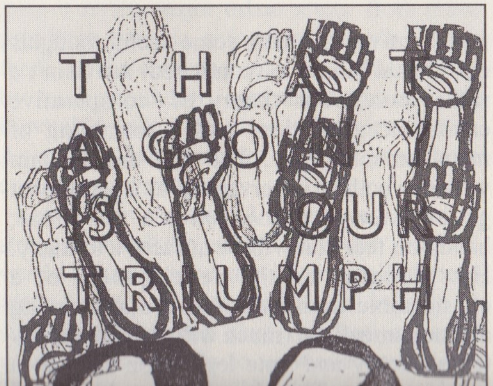
PETERSBURG

Russia's second city. Lots of stuff going on up there in the land of the White Nights. The Petersburg Anarchist League put out a good statement for the 27th. On 2nd of February, the governor of Petersburg decided to double municipal rents so the League wrote a resolution against it the next day – they like resolutions. On the fourth they participated in a demo against this, unfortunately with all sorts of disgusting kommunyaga like the CPRF, RKRP and the Russian Communist Party. Okay – hopefully they drew some attention away from those police staters. But pretty much they were working together with RKRP throughout February and March on this question, making multiple demos and pickets. I don't know – Kronstadt's too close by to forget about anarchist experience with the commies.

SACCO AND VANZETTI: SEVENTY YEARS

Nicola Sacco and Bartolemeo Vanzetti were hung in Boston, Massachusetts, on 23rd August 1927. Their anarchist propaganda work was all in the Italian language within the Italian immigrant community in the Boston area, and but for their sentence to death for murder they would have been obscure. As Vanzetti famously put it: "I might have to live out my life talking at street corners to scorning men. I might have die unmarked, unknown, a failure".

What brought them to prominence during their six years on death row was the obvious


THAT AGONY IS OUR TRIUMPH

END OF A JEWISH UTOPIA

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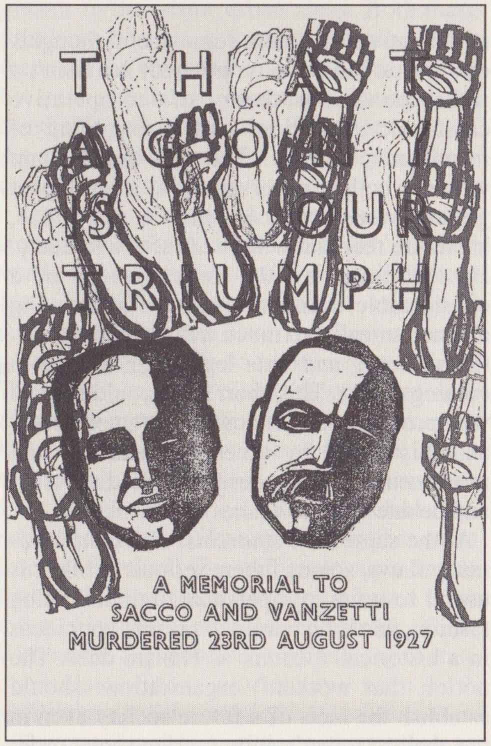
What brought them to prominence during their six years on death row was the obvious injustice of their convictions. Their alibi evidence was rejected by Judge Thayer and a jury of Anglo-Saxon Bostonians, because their alibi witnesses, upright conservatives, were Italian immigrants. The case against them, in effect, was that they were immigrants and held radical opinions.

No other anarchists have ever attracted so much public sympathy. One of their supporters was Gutzun Borglum, the sculptor who carved the famous gigantic faces of four presidents on Mount Rushmore. On the very day President Calvin Coolidge dedicated the Mount Rushmore monument, he rejected a plea for clemency on behalf of Sacco and Vanzetti. The sculptor absented himself from the dedication ceremony and went to Boston where he sculpted a bronze bas relief of Sacco and Vanzetti with a lop-sided pair of scales, representing injustice.

On 23rd August 1997, seventy years after the hanging, the mayor of Boston accepted and dedicated the seventy years old memorial.



In London there was a well-organised presentation of the case to the London Anarchist Forum by Milan Rai, Emily Johns and others. A memorial pamphlet (cover reproduced above) has been produced with text by Milan, two-colour illustrations by Emily and extracts from the sayings and letters of Sacco and Vanzetti. It is on sale from Freedom Press at £1.50 (plus 15p towards p&p in UK, 30p elsewhere).

END OF A JEWISH UTOPIA

Before the last world war of 1939-45 we welcomed at Freedom Press an enthusiastic Jewish couple from a Palestinian kibbutz. It was anarchism in action within a capitalist society. Though they had no money on their own as individual couples, every so often the 'community' would provide the means for families to go on a 'safari'. The children lived in their children's communities. If this writer's recollections are accurate, the kibbutz movement was mixed Arab-Jewish and nothing to do with religion. After all, we are talking about the years long before the creation of the Israeli state in 1948.

As we write the media informs us that the last of the kibbutz has given up. Apparently there were some 250 in the pioneering years. We anarchists always thought of them as pioneers of anarchism,[1] which they were until the state of Israel was established in 1948, and that state's antagonism to the Palestinians (whose land, after all, belonged to them) has developed into the clash which will no longer have a solution, any more than in Northern Ireland, until the invaders either get out or accept living with the locals as equals.

Freedom has always been very interested in the kibbutz movement and we cannot but recommend readers to secure our centenary volume *British Imperialism and the Palestine Crisis*[2] which is so important if one wants to understand the real problem of the Middle East and the dominating role of British imperialism. However, it does not in any way exculpate the Israeli state for its political policy towards the Arabs, whose country it is after all.

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1. *The Raven* no. 30 on 'New Life to the Land?' includes an important article on 'The End of the Kibbutz Movement?' (96 pages, £3.00 post free worldwide).

2. *British Imperialism and the Palestine Crisis*, contains selections from the anarchist journal *Freedom* 1938-1948 (104 pages, £1.95, post free inland, please add 15% abroad).

Rich and Poor

The problem of history is the the fabrication of legends or its examination and its correlation, and its sifting is a task beyond the capabilities of the amateur historian who wishes to distinguish between fact and fiction.

The admirable novels of Walker Scott and the speculations of H.G. Wells were written for such an amateur historian readership. But when it comes to understanding who our ancestors were, were any of them wise enough to foresee what an impossible task it is for an amateur to sort out the jumble of recorded or unrecorded stages of about 200,000 generations of doings and undoings.

My only conclusion is a surprisingly hopeful one, and I'm convinced that by looking at the behaviour of the population from an anarchist stand-point it is self-evident that no single individual or society exists without a visible trace of anarchist upbringing.

Stefan Themerson wrote something witty about "the last molecule of sugar, still sugar?" Perhaps not, but a pebble which was once part of a rock is still stone. In other words, in the last few generations there have been sporadic and valiant attempts in trying to establish political anarchism in many parts of the world, but nobody can claim that anarchist education has got anywhere near the vast bulk of the population. Therefore there can be no pebble which was once not part of a rock, so if there are visible patterns of anarchist behaviour still existing in the population one may say that in the remote past there may have been arrangements of life which the imagination today would recall and place in the anarchist picture frame.

To give just one example: the stranger will instantly jump to try to save a person from drowning.

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How do we fight capitalism?

Dear *Freedom*,
If your editorial writer knows of a method whereby human beings can make themselves intelligent by conscious effort I only wish he'd tell us what it is. He'd then be the greatest benefactor in history. If he doesn't know of such a method why does he so violently reject my contention that there isn't one?

I *agree* with him that for most people it's extremely difficult to opt out of the capitalist system, and I wouldn't dream of suggesting otherwise. His explanation of what he meant by opting out "not from the capitalist *system* but from the capitalist *mentality*" is an explanation that I myself might have given, and I can't make out why he imagines that I have misinterpreted that sentence – unless indeed it is he, and not the printer of his letter, who has misread my phrase "let's target the mentality" as "let's *forget* the mentality"!

His position, he protests, is that anarchists "are seeking to make more and more people utterly opposed to the capitalist system, and surely this means that they must change their views, their minds, their mentality about everything". Well, that's just what I always thought his position was!

The problem is that if I'm stuck in the stupid mentality of capitalism I need to become *intelligent* as well as non-capitalist, and neither I nor anarchists nor anybody else can make me intelligent. Unless I become intelligent I shall only change, if I change at all, from one stupid mentality to another – say from capitalism to socialism. Propaganda may make me do that, but it won't make me intelligent; and the only kind of mentality that can bring about a better society is an *intelligent* one, which doesn't just mean a non-capitalist one.

Hence the futility, as it seems to me, of the editorial writer blaming *nothing but* capitalism for all our ills.

I am suggesting that if only people would

To label the financial system as a devil incarnate and by propaganda attempt to corral the multitudes into rejecting capitalism is, to my mind, tilting at windmills.

Man has pursued wealth since time began – it is a part of human nature – and whether anarchists or non-anarchist, this innate proclivity has still to be overcome.

The anarchist stance in the world is, to me, essentially a moral stance. It is an attempt to re-model relationships between human beings nearer to the heart's desire.

I see nothing invalid in the proposition that life is a unitary process. On the contrary, it greatly enhances the case for anarchism. In reality we have so small a degree of freedom over ourselves and that must be exercised with care.

The question arises in respect of all this – have we as individuals any way of altering our 'mind set' or are we hapless leaves drifting on the river of evolution and time towards what?

PJW

Dear *Freedom*,
Concerning the comments in your recent letters pages, I agree with your "occasional editorial writer" on the outrageousness of those who would reduce oppression and social misery down to some kind of human condition, but I do not agree with his/her implication that such views should not be published. It is important to know exactly the state of affairs in the anarchist movement and, more precisely, to know the points of its stupidity. The unthinking and superstitious use of pseudo-scientific categories that seek to explain social phenomena in invincible biological or physical forces that are the preserve of those who equate anarchism with cynicism. These half-educated people are all too eager to broadcast generalisations about as if to screen something else – what exactly? Do they think, if they held more political opinions that revolution would be their responsibility? If so, it is a strange incarnation of that dubious protestant agitation that cites the moral imperative of doing something, of doing anything and the devil take the consequences. Isn't that better (and this involves degrees of evaluation, decision and also an acceptance of the human scale) to do the right thing, to do the only thing according to a political position which wishes to transform human life in favour of all those living it?

Certainly the idea that nature plays a more important role in society than human action justifies a kind of stoical quietism, but it also demeans the human spirit, demoralises those who hope for real liberation and belittles the achievements of those who do struggle. I have nothing against the philosophical bent and in contradistinction to the reductive tendency, I have met many amateur thinkers who are perhaps even less well educated but who are nonetheless able to maintain their humanity. These last converse very differently to the *philosophes*, from their own experiences in work and in personal relations they are able to situate their values concretely, thus their speculations, whether hopeful or despairing, are always insightful and somehow heartening. In short we must beware the generalisation, especially if its utterance seems to darken the world as it is all too easy for radicals to find perverse ways of speaking for the status quo. It is impossible to be an anarchist without a sense of justice, equivocality is anathema, it is also impossible to be an anarchist without being angry.

I continue to enjoy your magazine. It is not much to say that my literary and political life follows the fortnightly cycle of *Freedom*'s issue.

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I spent several years reading old texts from different continents. None of them go back far enough, no ancient historian could see that far back. Just as today one technology succeeds the last one, the Hellenic systematisation managed to wipe out all traces of the previous ages.

Here was both the concept of slave and master, whereas the people of the Eastern steppes lived in what we would describe as a matriarchy, and held all things in common. The anarchist amateur historian is reluctant to arbitrate over the past.

Had I lived in Byzantine times, but in the unrecorded regions both sides of the Ural mountains, a person like me could have ridden the whole distance in a hundred hours by changing horses in the time-honoured anarchist manner of 'park and ride'. At each stage a fresh horse was awaiting the rider, and when he rode back the horses also returned to their stables.

After a while you could doze off as the horse knew the way better than you. But when you arrived in the Byzantine world that must have been a culture shock. Here was a society built on slavery – everything was regulated, nothing was free. Pomp and ceremony and tremendous riches.

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Intelligence itself, not idealistic effort, is the liberating factor. That's why our educational system does everything it can to suppress it. Intelligence is uncontrollable and a danger to authority. It's anarchistic! But not violent. It has its own gentle power. It is the pure perception of truth.

Francis Ellingham

[We regret the printer's error – Editors]

Dear *Freedom*,
The letter from "your occasional editorial writer" (16th August) struck me as being extremely harsh and unjust towards Francis Ellingham ('The Gentle Anarchists', 2nd August).

He/she seems to think that just by opposing the capitalist system, the result will be a transformation of human nature and all of its devastating works.

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Privilege and a just society

Dear *Freedom*,
Larry Gambone (16th August) believes that it will take "at least 25 years" for the majority of the world's population to become part of the consumer society. Well, in 25 years the population is likely to be around eight billion as opposed to six billion today (assuming that famine, disease, etc., don't intervene). To provide just this *extra* two billion with cars at the *present* UK level would necessitate an *extra* seven to eight hundred million vehicles, i.e. considerably more than currently exist. Clearly this is not going to happen. It is all very well to talk of technology doing more with less, but technology is not magic. It will never be able to do everything with nothing at all.

Motor vehicles are an old technology. They have reached a 'technological plateau'. There are limits to their possible future development. So I feel justified in asserting that car ownership at the present UK level (itself lower than some other countries) will never be possible for the majority of humanity.

So the problem for those of us advocating a more egalitarian system is not persuading people of the iniquities and evils of capitalism, but convincing them that a future society without a car each, without foreign holidays every year, without meat for every meal, will be worth striving for. I am not harping on this to be miserable but because I think this is the major obstacle to social change in the 'developed' world. I don't know the answer, I only wish I did, but I do know that problems are never solved by pretending they don't exist, as Larry and all too many other people seem to in this case.

It is a characteristic of privileged classes to regard *their* privileges as freedoms. The middle class of the 'developed' (and 'developing') world may sometimes get incensed at the even more lavish privileges of the rich and the super-rich, but my reading of social history is that they will put up with them as long as their

Raven & Religion

Dear *Freedom*,
I apologise to Charles Crute for writing in *The*

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After a while you could doze off as the horse knew the way better than you. But when you arrived in the Byzantine world that must have been a culture shock. Here was a society built on slavery – everything was regulated, nothing was free. Pomp and ceremony and tremendous riches.

There was cross-fertilisation to the extent that none of the original tribes have survived with their aural communal memories intact. But there it is, what once took place can happen again and you may chisel at a rock as much as you like as even its dust will re-compose as stone.

Except, comrades need no reminding, this has been going on for the past 200,000 generations, of which regretfully only 2,000 generations is recorded history.

The Magna Carta with its demarcation and deeds and plots of land is at the most twenty generations ago. Was the land until then held in common?

Voltaire's saying that we live in "the best of all possible worlds" still holds while his hero Candide survives the greatest privations.

Perhaps the populations will do the same – perhaps in another 200,000 generations, give or take a few years.

John Rety

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Leaving Ireland?

Dear *Freedom*,
Ireland was all right with its separate kingdoms until the English came along and united it.

Nigel Barnes

please keep sending in your letters and donations . . .

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Larry Gambone (16th August) believes that it will take "at least 25 years" for the majority of the world's population to become part of the consumer society. Well, in 25 years the population is likely to be around eight billion as opposed to six billion today (assuming that famine, disease, etc., don't intervene). To provide just this *extra* two billion with cars at the *present* UK level would necessitate an *extra* seven to eight hundred million vehicles, i.e. considerably more than currently exist. Clearly this is not going to happen. It is all very well to talk of technology doing more with less, but technology is not magic. It will never be able to do everything with nothing at all.

Motor vehicles are an old technology. They have reached a 'technological plateau'. There are limits to their possible future development. So I feel justified in asserting that car ownership at the present UK level (itself lower than some other countries) will never be possible for the majority of humanity.

So the problem for those of us advocating a more egalitarian system is not persuading people of the iniquities and evils of capitalism, but convincing them that a future society without a car each, without foreign holidays every year, without meat for every meal, will be worth striving for. I am not harping on this to be miserable but because I think this is the major obstacle to social change in the 'developed' world. I don't know the answer, I only wish I did, but I do know that problems are never solved by pretending they don't exist, as Larry and all too many other people seem to in this case.

It is a characteristic of privileged classes to regard *their* privileges as freedoms. The middle class of the 'developed' (and 'developing') world may sometimes get incensed at the even more lavish privileges of the rich and the super-rich, but my reading of social history is that they will put up with them as long as their own *privileges* continue. I agree with Larry that it's very much an open question whether capitalism can continue to provide them, but I don't agree that it's *inconceivable* that a strong global capitalism could dispense with many of them in future. The economy may be two-thirds consumer goods, but what proportion of these products are destined for the rich and the very well-paid sections of the middle class? This is why many companies in many industries have gone 'up market' in recent years.

I know my picture of the middle class lifestyle above may be slightly exaggerated, but it is accurate for many millions in the 'developed' world and many more strive to emulate it, with some hopes of success.

John Wood

Raven & Religion

Dear *Freedom*,
I apologise to Charles Crute for writing in *The Raven* no. 35 that "we failed to persuade" religious anarchists to contribute to the *Ravens* on religion.

My objective was to mollify those who would object to articles favouring psychoanalysis, by arguing that if we let the opposition have their say readers could judge for themselves whether their ideas were sensible.

The religious did not contribute anything to the *Ravens* on religion, and I might have just said that, but "we failed to persuade them to contribute" seemed a more persuasive phrase at the time. I realise now that it implies we tried to persuade them, which is indeed a falsehood.

No offence was intended.

Donald Rooum

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CAMBRIDGE AND DISTRICT

Anybody interested in forming a Freedom Readers Group in this area, come along to The Conservatory, The Cambridge Blue Public House, Gwydir Street, Cambridge, from 8pm on the first Wednesday of each month (starting 3rd September).

Contact Bill on 01223 511737

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meet every Wednesday fortnight at
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ACF

DISCUSSION MEETINGS

Discussion meetings open to the public are convened by the London group of the Anarchist Communist Federation on the first Thursday of every month. They start at 8pm at the Marchmont Community Centre, Marchmont Street, London WC1 (nearest tube Russell Square). Disabled access. Free entrance.

Further information from
ACF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX

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public meetings first Tuesday of the month at 8pm
The Brow House, 1 Mabfield Road,
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Saturday 18th October
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Conway Hall
Red Lion Square, London WC1
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Contact: New Anarchist Review,
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London Anarchist Forum

Meets Fridays at about 8pm at Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL. Admission is free but a collection is made to cover the cost of the room. Anyone interested in giving a talk or leading a discussion please contact Carol Saunders or Peter Neville at the meetings.

– 1997 PROGRAMME –

5th September General discussion

12th September What Now for Class War? (speakers from Class War)

19th September Hampshire Constabulary: A Threat to Free Speech? (speakers from the Gandalf Defence Campaign)

26th September Anarchy on the Net (speaker Martin Peacock)

3rd October General discussion

10th October What would you do if you won the Lottery? (speaker Adrian Williams)

17th October General discussion

24th October Political Correctness (symposium)

DIALOGUE FOR CHANGE

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September 7th: Loughborough countryside. Meet 1pm at the Forest Gate Pub, Forest Road, Loughborough. Circular walk in fields and woodland.

Telephone for further details
01773-827513

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